LANGUAGES IN CHANGING SOCIETIES: New Caledonia and Okinawa

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The Pacific area is known for its great diversity of languages. This region is said to contain a fifth of the world's languages which include the genetically diverse languages of Australia, New Guinea, and those belonging to the Austronesian family. Melanesia, especially, is the area where the language situation is most complicated. We often find different languages spoken by two adjacent villages. In New Caledonia where my field work was conducted, twenty-eight languages distinct in phonology and grammar have been counted. Since Europeans colonized the islands, the linguistic situation has radically changed. The populations are often dispersed from their places of origin, deprived of their lands or livelihood, with children often sent away from their parents for education in French.

As languages in the world differ so much from each other, the situations they are facing differ much, too. In some countries, the use of only one or a few predominant languages are encouraged according to national, economical, or political priorities. People who speak minority languages often sacrifice themselves for the national interest. Today, the rate at which languages disappear seems to be far greater than ever before in human history, and the future viability of these minority languages has recently become a serious concern among linguists. Some linguists suggest that many languages will not survive beyond the next generation. There are many languages of Oceania that have already disappeared, including Australian Aboriginal languages, a tragic effect of contact with outside colonial powers. There were originally about 250 languages spoken in Australia. Today about 150 of these exist. Two thirds of them, however, have only a dozen or so

speakers. Compulsory education in English has accelerated the decline of Aboriginal languages, as it has done in similar situations elsewhere in the world. Many of those surviving in Oceania are more or less under threat of extinction. Dixon[1] predicts that of 1980 languages perhaps 200 will be spoken in A.D. 2200. He states that every language with fewer than 10,000 speakers is at risk of extinction in the medium term. This includes all of the 28 languages of New Caledonia. Two thirds of the New Caledonian languages with less than 1000 speakers are severely at risk. The loss of a language means that the most essential part of a human community is lost, since the language is the patrimony of the people, the reflection and the means of their recognition of the world.

While there are many people in the world whose mother tongues are not a national or official language of the country they live in, English speakers can generally make themselves understood or express what they want using their language in many international contexts. English has played an important role as a lingua franca among different language speakers but with a heavy burden imposed on the side of non-English speakers. People who can afford to use their language in communication are often not aware of the difficulty and inconvenience non-native speakers cope with, while not even feeling the necessity of learning a foreign language. Some people naively suggest that speakers of minority languages had better abolish their languages and adopt English.

Language is so essential to human life that almost everything around us is expressed by and conceptualized through language. The world is viewed and analyzed in a very different manner according to the language one speaks. For example, plurality is expressed in some languages but not in other languages. Some may have a complicated gender or noun class system, while others have none. The degree of abstraction or the semantic domain of a word is only rarely the same as a "corresponding" term in another language. Therefore, using a non-native language results in a great handicap for the speaker. Learning a foreign language normally costs enormous energy and time, and still

one cannot reach a native speaker's competence.

In this respect, ruling through language may be the most powerful though invisible form of colonialism. As the language is closely related to the culture, tradition, the value system of the society of its speakers, indigenous people are doubly handicapped in acquiring a language with new philosophy and new lifestyle. To be deprived of one's own language is like losing one's identity. Pacific islanders often suffered a lot from this. Sometimes, as in Micronesia, they were forced to use Spanish, then German, Japanese and then English according to the changing colonial climate.

In Australia, since a compaign to have Aboriginal children given their primary education in Aboriginal languages started in 1972,[2] bilingual education programs have been conducted in various places. Aboriginal children are taught basic literacy skills in their own language first, to gain more confidence before they start to learn English, the official language of the state.[3]

New Caledonia is a French overseas territory, with a population of about 150,000, of which about 40% are Melanesians. The official language is French, while indigenous languages are spoken by Melanesians, and some other languages such as Polynesian are spoken by immigrants who settled there mainly after World War II. Melanesians had a tradition of bi- or multi-lingualism, which had enabled them to keep the identity of their tribe, while fulfilling the need to be allied with neighboring tribes through exchanges and intermarriages. There was no one native language that enjoyed particular prestige. This situation has changed since the islands were colonized by the French, as the native population has often been dispersed from its traditional dwelling places. Kanak people often move from place to place, spending some time in villages/towns or nickel mines to earn money, as a result of the change in their lifestyle. The majority of good farming land belongs to French Caledonians, the Kanak people producing only 5% of the total domestic products, and they don't have as many hunting grounds as before. Many Kanak people feel it difficult to integrate into the modern

world with their philosophy not much changed as before, and yet cannot go back to their old ways of living, either. Children are often separated from their parents and sent to schools in villages, where Kanak languages are suppressed in the educational system. In this situation, Kanak languages in general are not passed to the younger generation properly except for some languages such as Drehu, Paicî, Ajië, and Xârâcùù; some languages have completely disappeared (e.g. Waamwang and Pouguépai of Voh), or are spoken by a very small number of people (e.g. Arhö and Sichë).[4]

Kanak People's Schools known as the EPK (Ecole Populaire Kanake) were established in February 1985, when FLNKS (Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste) decided to boycott schools at Nakety. According to Marie-Adèle Néchérö-Jorédié, who organised the EPK and has been a chief instructor at Canala EPK, Kanak people had been concerned with the fact that their young ones were failing to reintegrate into their home environment.[5] They were coming home without even being able to speak their own language, and with no knowledge of their culture. Parents in this area, therefore, felt that some measures should be taken to introduce Melanesian culture into schools. They started, therefore, without waiting for official sanction, or without prepared teaching materials, calling parents to the school to talk about their culture. From 1982 they started language teaching to adults, using a book of Melanesian languages. When the territory's independence movement gained momentum, the EPK, whose activity was already going on for years, was established on a more formal basis. The EPK aimed to train and produce citizens to help the development of a nation they wanted to build. They thought it important to educate children in their own mother language first, and that French should be introduced later as a second language. Kanak children could not express themselves properly in French because it was not their language, and they could not speak their language because it was forbidden.

Although several hundred children from 4 to 18 studied at EPKs, with different tribes organizing their own work groups, they could not

arouse a nationwide interest in their schools. They were not successful in spite of their effort to place young Kanaks within their own culture and to prepare them for living in the modern world, perhaps due to too little help from professionals and the lack of support from society in general. Traditional French schools, instead, have started offering some Melanesian languages in their curriculum, and three Kanak languages, Xârâcùù, Ajië and Paicî, are now available as options for Baccalaureat.

A big problem arising out of the field of education is that in addition to the paucity of good textbooks on languages, the orthography used varies among languages. The divergence in phonology among them is so great that it has hindered any one writing system to develop to describe all languages in New Caledonia. Languages in the north generally have a rich consonant system that include distinction between aspirated and non-aspirated voiceless stops, a series of post-nasalized stops, and aspirated nasals and laterals. Southern languages, though they have much fewer consonants, exhibit a number of different phonemes, including the retroflexes /ʈ, ɖ, ɳ, ɽ/ as opposed to dentals or alveolar.[6] The number of vowels, in contrast, increases from the north to the south, and in the central region there are even tonal languages.

Certain phonemes such as velarized labials and prenasalized stops are common among many New Caledonian languages, and following the practice adopted for some languages that have tradition of writing can be expressed using a number of digraphs and diacritics. However, such practices, normally acquired through the missionaries in some districts, as in the Loyalty Islands and Houailou, can sometimes mislead speakers into an imprecise pronunciation, because they were often developed by people who had no professional linguistic training. Even when one orthography is good enough to express the sounds in one language, it is often inadequate for others. From a readability point of view, it is in general best not to employ too many diacritics or phonetic symbols in spellings. An agreed-upon convention by which to express diverse pronunciations of languages is necessary. Until now, different spellings have often been employed for the same word: the language of Balade in

the extreme north, for example, has been written as Yâlayu, Nyelâyu, Nialayu, or Yalasu on different occasions.

I would now like to turn to an examination of the Okinawan language situation as it has been observed over the past three years. The Okinawan language is undergoing a process similar to many New Caledonian languages. Though in the case of Okinawan there are still hundreds of thousands of speakers it is not being passed on to the younger generation. I will examine here the factors which determine the speakers' attitude toward language, the community's language preference, and the relationship between language and the preservation of people's culture and traditions.

Okinawa was already inhabited in the paleolithic period, and its kingdom over the Ryukyu archipelago lasted until 1879 when it was integrated into the Japanese government as the 47th prefecture. Over 250 years prior to that, the kingdom had been subjugated by the Japanese feudal clan of Satsuma in Kagoshima. After World War II until 1972, Okinawa was under American occupation.

Until 1879 Okinawan people had been speaking their own language, which is genetically related to Japanese of mainland Japan but distinct from it in many aspects of the phonology, grammar and vocabulary. Then Standard Japanese was introduced and drastically changed the linguistic situation. Standard Japanese came into their lives through the education system which included a conversation school set up in 1880, and through media and communication with mainland people. Before World War II, Okinawans were forced to speak the standard language, as a part of "Japanizing" policy as is often illustrated by the story about the *hogen-fuda*, which literally means "dialect tag" used in the assimilation education on Okinawans. A pupil who used Okinawan at school had to wear the tag around his neck as a punishment. He or she had to keep it until somebody else spoke Okinawan, to whom the tag was passed. As the last pupil who wore the tag on a day was scolded by a teacher, children found a good way to get rid of the tag was to hit another pupil, because the one hit would invariably cry out "Agaa",

meaning "Ouch" in Okinawan. There was also the terrible rumor that during World War II people who spoke Okinawan could be shot by Japanese soldiers who might take Okinawans as spies speaking an unintelligible language.

At present, we do not hear much Okinawan in the cities of the archipelago. I first heard Okinawan spoken in all its vividness when I was hospitalized there and shared a room with three elderly women. I could not understand a word they spoke with their visitors. Since then, after observing different situations and talking to students and local people, I have realized that Okinawan is still active in some areas, among some people, and in some situations even among students. That is, Okinawan is used less, but is still alive in a different form.

Okinawan has many dialects, much differentiated in the northern part of Okinawa's main island. Also, each small island has its own distinct dialect. The degree of preservation of the dialects differs much according to area. Nakijin, a village in the north of Okinawa, has slightly different dialects in all its small communities. This place, an ancient castle town, has a quarter which served as the residential area for warriors separate from merchants and other lower classes. People living in this quarter speak with different accents, and with well developed honorific expressions. The Okinawan language is strongly retained in Nakijin, as shown by students from this village who speak fairly good Okinawan. It is presumed that the people of this village are quite proud of their historical heritage, and while saying their language has a rural accent and inferior to the language spoken in Shuri or Naha in the South of Okinawa, they still do not hesitate to use it. The fact that villagers are engaged often in farms raising cattle or in agriculture and have kept their traditional lifestyle with few new settlers, may be another reason for their language being well preserved.

And yet also in the northern part of Okinawa, people in Oogimi village no longer speak their languages. I talked to a lady 91 years old there, who spoke beautiful Standard Japanese. She told me that there was a *hogen-fuda* at the elementary school where she went, and parents

and villagers coordinated very closely with the school. Her parents spoke to each other in their dialect but they used Standard Japanese with her. Everybody in the village tried hard to speak in Standard Japanese, including a fish vender, who had used to sing out "*Io konsoore*" in Okinawan, but changed her language to *sakana kaimasenka* meaning "would you like to buy fish?" (*io* "fish" in Okinawan corresponds to *sakana* in Standard Japanese). She explained that because villagers always had an inferiority complex about their dialect vis-à-vis that spoken in the Capital Okinawa, they took the occasion willingly to abandon their language to adopt Standard Japanese. They would still speak in Okinawan among themselves because that was their mother tongue naturally, but they were especially careful to make sure their children would be good at Yamatoguchi (Standard Japanese).

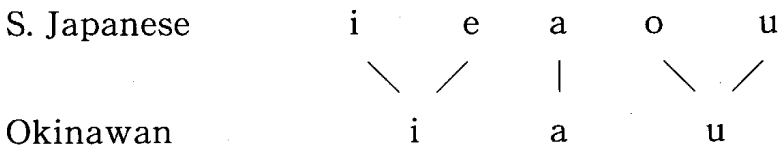
There is an interesting contrast between these two villages, as a person from Nakijin remembers people of her village saying, "Why can't you speak our own language?" while the lady from Oogimi said adult people used to say, "Oh, don't use Uchinaaguchi (Okinawan). Speak proper Japanese." This difference in attitude resulted in a big difference in the next generation's ability to use Okinawan. I noticed that people from the capital area such as Naha and Shuri, or Itoman which is a fishermen's village where tradition is well preserved, generally retain their language better than people in other areas. One would think that in remote islands such as Miyako where speakers are segregated, the local language would be maintained, but in reality, people in rural areas were the first people to convert themselves to Yamatoguchi speakers, probably from feeling inferior to residents of Naha or Yamato (the term for mainland Japan). This also explains why, more than any other area of Japan, the standardization of language was carried out in Okinawa without much reaction against it. Thus, people over 65 generally can speak good Okinawan as well as Standard Japanese with Okinawan accents, and people around 50, depending on the area they were brought up and who they were mixing with, can generally speak Okinawan fairly well but only with the right people and on the right occasion.

People between 35 and 50 can generally understand spoken Okinawan, but cannot speak it well. Young people often cannot even understand it. A recent study[7] concerning people's ability in and consciousness of Okinawan language shows that the older the people are, the more they have confidence in their speaking good Standard Japanese. Yet, according to the same study, younger people express that they do not have confidence in speaking either good Standard Japanese nor good Okinawan. Older people also report that they can choose and use either language according to the occasion.

Some Okinawan words and expressions have gone out of use as the traditions and customs associated with them have died out. They include *habusarii* which means "straws tied up in a wreath to put between the head and things to carry on head", *uriyasumii* "wet days when people plant potatoes", *tamunuu* "firewood", *pagama* "iron pot to cook rice", *bindaree* "washbowl", *gujinmii* "a trench filled with straw beside an animal pen, where rain water runs in with excrement from animals for compost" and *huuru* "a pig pen with attached toilet, where excrement is fed to pigs."

One area where Okinawan is still used vividly is at the theaters called uchinaa shibai, and in poems called ryuuka and kyooka. The language is essential in these plays usually depicting Okinawan customs and manners, and in poems which have a unique Okinawan style, consisting of 8, 8, 8, 6 syllables. These plays were shown on TV for sometime in Okinawa with Japanese subtitles, and an old lady said the subtitles never conveyed the right nuances of the Okinawan language. There are really very imaginary, vivid expressions used in these plays such as *namanee, kubinujaani, bin'nu hutana shiwadunaisa* meaning "(I) will plug his neck this time and make it a lid for a bottle", or, *iibii nagete, miinu gyun'do* meaning "(I'll) throw my finger and pull your eyes out".[8] Another expression is *On'na dakeagata satuga umarijima morin'ushinukete kogatanasana* meaning "over the On'na mountain my lover lives. I want to make him come this way by pushing the mountain aside."[9]

The standard Japanese that have spread over the Ryukyu archipelago rapidly is the one heavily influenced by Okinawan accent, as the result of efforts done by the older generation to imitate the standard without much formal training. This Japanese spoken by the majority of Okinawans at present is called Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi, "Okinawan-style Japanese". Its characteristics in pronunciation come from the difference in phonemic systems of two languages: Okinawan has generally three vowels (e.g. /a, i, u/ in Naha) or four in some areas, while Standard Japanese has five, as illustrated in the following.



Okinawan	S. Japanese	meaning
hadʒi:	kaze	"wind"
tui	tori	"bird"
puʃi	hoʃi	"star"
tʃitʃi	tsuki	"month"
mi:	me	"eye"
ttʃu	hito	"person"
nu:	nani	"what"
tʃu:	kyoo	"today"

The mixing of the vowels from Okinawan and Japanese systems is sometimes observed in Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi, as in: *odewa* < J. *udewa* "bracelet"; *sowaru* < J. *suwaru* "sit". The /e/ is often pronounced with an on-glide [j] as in [jeigo] (=*eigo* "English"). The [d] and [r] are often interchanged in Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi as they are allophones in Okinawan: e.g. *dippa* < J. *rippa* "excellent"; *doosoku* < J. *roosoku* "candle"; *karara* < J. *karada* "body". [ka] and [ga] are sometimes pronounced [kwa] and [gwa] in Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi as in: *kwaisa* < J. *kaisha* "company"; *gwaikoku* < J. *gaikoku* "foreign country".[10] As in Okinawan, [t]

may occur in front of [i] and [u], and [f] is also heard in some words: e.g. *afaa* "stupid person"; *piituu* "dolphin".

In the survey I conducted in 1996 of Okinawan students, many said that, though they are not good at Okinawan, they can speak it when they "fight". In other words, their Okinawan is limited to that kind of intimate, personal or emotional context. Because of that, Okinawan used among the youth is sometimes perceived as "not acceptable" or even "vulgar" by elderly people. Students who are from other parts of Japan also pick up these expressions when they get accustomed to Okinawan ways, and this, as a result, makes them more easily accepted in Okinawan circles. The status of this Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi located between Okinawan and Standard Japanese is unstable, as it is subject to assimilation into Standard Japanese through education and the mass media, especially with more people having contact with mainlanders. This phenomenon resembles the process of "de-creolization", which is seen when a creole language (developed from a pidgin to become a mother tongue in some parts of the world) keeps in contact with the colonizers' language (generally an European language) and starts changing towards the latter as is the more prestigeous language. We can observe the similar continuum of languages along the line of Okinawan, Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi, and Standard Japanese.

While the language in Okinawa is approaching to Standard Japanese, Okinawan young people have also coined many expressions using Okinawan morphological devices. As expressed in the survey, they feel a strong attachment to their parents' language, which, in spite of their wish to learn it, has gone too far out of use for them. Therefore, they have been creating their own version of Okinawan language, one that the older people say "can't be Okinawan", and one that, at the same time, reflects their desire to seek identity as Okinawans, while being able to communicate with new friends from mainland Japan. Thus it includes a lot of the slang that is going around on the mainland and imported via mass media, while maintaining the tint of Okinawan, creating a variety of hybrids such as standard words with Okinawan inflections. Okina-

wan students admit that some expressions are used among the youth, but in fact they sometimes use them without really knowing what they mean. The language is growing rapidly, always adding new vocabulary from mainlander students whose presence is ever increasing at Okinawan universities. Some English expressions acquired through Americans in Okinawa also characterize their language.

Okinawan words used often in their speech are by and large those expressing some types of people, body parts and feelings, customs, rituals, cuisines, and emphatic expressions. Okinawan has three productive suffixes, *-aa*, *-mun*, and *-chuu* which give the meaning of "a person who . . .". Words suffixed by one of them, for example, are: *teefaa* "joker", *turubayaa* "dumb", *gachimayaa* "glutton", *hingaa* "dirty person", *yoogaraa* "skiny person", *wajiyaa* "angry person", *shikamun* "coward", *waayanamun* "bad person", *shimanchuu* "islander". New words coined with the suffix *-aa* include *hattaraa* "lier" < J. *hattari* "bluff", *shittakaa* "one who pretends to know" < J. *shittakaburi* "pretend to know", *kusaraa* "one who sulks" < J. *kusaru* "sulk", *inchikaa* "one who tricks" < J. *inchiki* "tricks", *amerikaa* "American" < E. America. *-Guwaashii* is suffixed to mean "a person pretending to be . . .": *shiijaaguwaashii* "a person pretending to be old".

Among those indicating body parts, there is *chimu*, corresponding to *kimo* "liver" in Standard Japanese. It expresses the feeling or compassion shared and cherished in the Okinawan society. There are many words compounded with it, including *chimugurisan* "feel sorry, sympathetic", *chimugukuru* "affection", *chimuiri* "heartfelt", *chimuyamii* "heartache", *chimudondon* "heart beating", and *chimunjasun* "sympathize and look after well".

Other Okinawan words often employed are: e. g. *churakaagii* "pretty woman", *meegoosaa* "fist", *hiijaa* "goat", *mayaa* "cat", *naabeeraa* "gourd", *jiimaami* "peanuts", *irichaa* "stir fry", *ajikuutaa* "strong taste", *yuimaaru* "harmony", *yuta* "psychic", *kajimayaa* "the 97th anniversary of one's birth", *tootoome* "memorial tablet", *ugan* "prayer", *utaki* "sacred place", *mooashibi* "kind of a beach party".

Okinawan suffix *-gwaa*, a "diminutive", is used productively as in: *amegwaa* "little rain", *orikoogwaa* "little good boy", *sukoshigwaa* "tiny bit", *shimagwaa* "small island", *tanagwaa* "small shelf".

Okinawan verbs and adjectives are employed but conjugate like Japanese: e.g. *abisiteiru* "be shouting", *abiree* "speak up !", *wajiwajiisuru* "get irritated", *yuntakusuru* "have a group talk", *hingasu* "let escape", *shikabu* "get surprised", *sugaru* "dress up", *yaasagamiisuru* "eat like a glutton", *chanpuruu* "mix", *yamasu* "hurt", *hogasu* "dig a hole", *butturuu* "sticking out", *niriru* "get tired", *kanihanjiru* "get senile", *magii* "big", *yaasai* "hungry", *daaru* "is right, is so", *nadaguruguruu* "weep", *geren* "stupid", *shimusa* "don't worry", *anmasai* "troublesome, tiring", *hiisai* "cold", *umusai* "interesting", *chimui* "pitiful", *duugurushii* "feel uneasy".

Many emphatics, interjections and sentence-final particles are taken from Okinawan: *akisamiyoo* "oh, no !", *chaa* "always", *miikusuppi* "a tiny bit", *teegee* "easy going, not exact", *ippee* "really", *deeji* "very", *chibariyoo* "cheer up", *hasshi* "oh !" (when surprised), *shittaihyaa* "well done", *haisai* "hello", *kurusarindoo* "you'll be beaten up", *kusuu* "very bad, shit", *shini* "very", *saaranai* "at once", *jiraa* "... like", *annii* "isn't it ?", *yami* "?" (suffix for a question).

Words borrowed from the mainland slang are: e.g. *choo* "super", *mecchaa* "very", *habuu* "ostracize, an outcast", *dasadasa* "country bumpkin, boorish", *kebai* "meretricious", *mukatsuku* "feel angry", *maji* "really, (I) mean it", *misudoo* "Mr Daughnut", *takuru* "take a taxi". Those borrowed from English and unique to Okinawa include: *paaraa* "stall", *biichi paatii* "barbecue on the beach", *takoraisu* "rice with tacos", *ricchaa* "rich person".

There are many Okinawan words which have Japanese cognates with slightly different meanings. Often people use them without really recognizing the differences. They include:

	Okinawan meaning	S. Japanese meaning
wata	"belly"	"guts"

aruku	"commute, work"	"walk"
hizamazuku	"sit properly with folded legs"	"kneel"
amai	"weak taste"	"sweet"
jootoo	"good, well done"	"good quality"
yagate	"almost dangerously"	"eventually"
korosu	"hit"	"kill"
awateru	"hurry"	"panic"
yomu	"count"	"read"
haku	"put on (clothes)"	"put on (trousers or socks)"
yabureru	"break"	"tear"
nakami	"guts"	"contents"
nishi	"north"	"west"
yasui	"easy"	"cheap"; can mean "easy" only in a compound with a verbal stem

Words expressing aspects or moods are also used differently. *Hazu* is used in the standard Japanese to express that something is "due, scheduled", or "supposed to occur", but in Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi, it is used with the meaning of "probably" or "may . . .": *kuru hazu* "may come" < O. *chuuruhaji*. *Shoo-ne* is often put at the end of a sentence meaning "I will do . . .," which in Standard means "let's do . . .". Similarly, when one requests something, *yoo-ne* is suffixed to a verb stem as in *kari-yoo-ne*, which in the standard language means "let's borrow . . .". This would be expressed as *kashite-ne* "lend me . . . please" in the standard language. *Wake*, "reason" in the standard language, is used often at the end of sentences, just like ". . . noda," not necessarily explaining some reason: *ii da wake* (J. *ii desu* "it is all right"). *Iru* "exist" is also used with a slight difference, often being added to a verb as in: *juugo-nin mo kite-ita* when in Standard Japanese it is *juugo-nin mo kita* "fifteen people came"; *koko ni kite kara kenkoo ni natte-iru-yo* for *koko ni kite kara kenkoo ni natta-yo* "I have become healthy since I came here." In Okinawan sentences *iru*, which in Standard Japanese adds a progressive or stative meaning,

occurs, while corresponding Japanese sentences have the simple past tense. Particles and demonstratives are used with slightly different meanings, too. *Kara*, for example, is used as in: *ijimerarete-kara naite-ita* (J. *ijimerarete naita*) "(One) cried as he/she was bullied". Double particles are sometimes heard as in: *doko ni-ga ii-ka* (J. *doko ga iika*) "which place is good ?"; *yaa ga-wa ie kara deta* (J. *anata wa ie o deta*) "you left your house". The verbs such as *iku, kuru, ageru, kureru, morau* are used differently than in Standard Japanese which distinguishes on the basis of the speaker's perspective (towards/from the speaker). Okinawans can say *ima-kara kuru-yo* "I will come (to your place or somewhere) now". In Standard Japanese *kuru* is used only when someone/something comes "toward the speaker". Therefore, the above expression would be replaced by *ima-kara iku-yo* "I will go now."

Okinawa now is attracting nation-wide concern as a result of the large number of American military bases concentrated there, and its people seem to be gaining more confidence than ever before in expressing what they feel and want. This gain of confidence is encouraging them to revive their culture and tradition, and they are asserting themselves through their language. In many places in Okinawa, including Miyako island, speech contests in Okinawan and recitations of Okinawan folk tales are being performed to encourage the use of the language. Okinawans who once felt inferior to mainland Japan and tried hard to catch up have now been replaced by a younger generation that seeks a new identity for Okinawans. Recently, people on mainland Japan are becoming more and more interested in Okinawa as it is introduced through literature, music, comics, artifacts, arts, and various other Okinawan products. Many Okinawan writers and artists are gaining popularity beyond the borders of Okinawa. Their language is dynamically changing with the modernization and growth of society. In spite of pressure from the standard language it will keep its uniqueness and reflect its speakers' pride in themselves and their zest to preserve their culture and tradition.

It is inevitable for various reasons that many languages in the

world are used less frequently than in the past; however, whether a language survives or not depends largely on how conscious its speakers are of their language, how they strive to preserve their culture and traditions and maintain their identity. In the Okinawan case, the language generally spoken now is no longer the same as the one spoken by older generations, but has changed into a different form. In the Okinawan language, however, we can see, as observed above, the essence of the people's life and feeling. The languages in New Caledonia are facing a more serious situation, as the Kanak people have been losing their culture as well as their languages with their lifestyles conforming more and more to French ways. When I visited Noumea this year, the Kanak people were concentrating on preparing for the opening of the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou. This center, due to be completed in 1998, is expected to become the real center for the Kanak people, exhibiting their culture and traditions in the past, present and future. ADCK (Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak) want young Kanak people to find their identity there, gain pride in themselves, and preserve and share their culture in cooperation with the other indigenous peoples of Oceania area. As EPKs (the education in Kanak languages) mentioned earlier were started out of the independence movement in the eighties, the new center is expected to be a formidable tool for inspiring young Kanak people to discover themselves and to cherish their languages and culture.

Notes

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8) Kyan, Kazuo. 1996. 'Okinawago to cosmology', *Edge*, 30–31. Hokama, Shuzen. 1995. *Nanto no Jojo*, Tokyo: Chuko Bunko.
9) *Ibid.*
10) cf. Takaesu, Yoriko. 1994. 'Uchinaa-Yamatoguchi no kenkyuu,' *Okinawa gengo Kenkyuu Center Shiryoo* No. 117.

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